

Sweet Hall
Sweet Hall
King William County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-385

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District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office

SWEET HALL

Sweet Hall, King William County, Virginia

Owner: Palmer FamilyDate of erection: Late seventeenth century or early eighteenthBuilder: Claiborne FamilyPresent condition: FairDescription:

Sweet Hall is one of the most arresting architectural designs of the transition between the romantic seventeenth-century architecture of Virginia and the academic eighteenth century. It is dramatic in its position, high above the Pamunkey River, and in its steep roof and tall T-shaped chimneys.

The building is of brick laid in English bond, now partly whitewashed and plastered. It is a story and a half high, with a rear wing forming a T-plan, and a gabled roof. The front is five bays long with a center door. The windows have nine-over-nine-light sash and are larger in size than those on the side elevation. On the roof are five gabled dormers with four-over-four sash. A study of the rear elevation of the main house shows that, originally, the front probably corresponded to the elevations of Malvern Hill and the Galt House in Williamsburg, which have a single large window on either side of the entrance door with a small window near each end of the facade opening into the chimney closets. The fact that the front is now plastered and the sash and frames are not original supports the theory that changes have been made and that the dormers are apparently contemporary with the sash and frames below and are not original. Aside from their detail, the fact that the roof pitches do not coincide with the main roof makes it appear that they are alterations, as in early dormers the roof slope coincides with that of the roof they come against. The chimneys of the main block are built inside the gable walls and appear above the ridge in tall T-shaped stacks with elaborately worked caps. These comprise a necking, three offset cap courses with a high brick wash above. The rear wing seems contemporary and is chiefly notable for the great weathered offset chimney in the north wall.

The plan is three large rooms with the stair (now rebuilt) on the west wall of the rear room. Little old trim of interest remains except the paneled doors.

Author:

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Date:

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